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## OBJECTIVE FREEDOM.

PRABHU DUTT SHASTRI.

**O**BJECTIVE freedom is true freedom actualised in the world we live in. Subjectively, man is conscious of being free, and the knowledge of the freedom of will is rooted in this intuition. But it is not enough to be conscious of the fact that I can *will* what I will; in order to be able to enjoy that life of peace and repose which comes from a complete harmony of a multitude of wills, I must be able to actualise my subjective freedom in the world. It is only then that the various individual wills will cease to clash with one another.

In Hindu Philosophy the conception of true (or objective) freedom is known as *Jīvanmukti*, which means the attainment of *mukti* or freedom in this very life (or, more literally, while alive: *jīvat*). Such freedom is most difficult to realise, and falls to the lot of those only who by means of a severe and long training have been able to experience their identity with Nature. There is the same universal spiritual principle—the *ātman*—existing in man and pervading nature. It is the great cosmic illusion—*Māyā*—that creates the human error of differentiating the Self in man and the Self in nature. The fact is that man, by some kind of ignorance, dissects existence into the subjective and the objective. Howsoever, such a distinction may be necessary for the makeup and organisation of our knowledge and experience, it is ultimately false, and is at the same time responsible for many speculative errors when a mere distinction in thought is treated as a division in reality. Hindu philosophy attempts to set down the means enabling us to transcend the sphere of *Māyā* and attain true freedom. It does not simply analyse the notion of such freedom, but lays down the practical steps leading to the path of its realisation, such as *Sama*, *Dama*, *Uparati*, *Titikshā*, *Samādhāna*, etc. True freedom is true Yoga,

the freedom enjoyed by a *Yogi*, who attains to that spiritual vision by which he sees "the same one and the all" everywhere. In his consciousness all barriers and limitations of individuation cease to operate, since he transcends the very principle of individuation. He transcends space, time and everything else. This enables him to govern nature, and to attain to those eight kinds of perfections (*siddhis*) which are viewed as wonderful miracles. If he is true to the functions of a *real* *Yogi*, he does not care to demonstrate his mystic power by suchlike miracles, but leads a life of complete indifferentism, like that of an inert block of stone, as it were. He transcends the territory within which moral distinctions are called for or valid. He moves in the sphere of the *non-moral*. This is the very highest stage of self-realisation, which can hardly be appreciated by those who judge every conduct and every activity by their human norms of utility. We are all inclined to that way of judgment, and consequently highly-developed souls, the great saints and sages, appear to us as eccentric or mad, since they refuse to follow the usual lines of human activity. The stage next below this one would be that of the highest moral perfection, when man, conscious of his identity with the principle of the Good, or of his individual will with the universal human Will, is capable of doing the greatest amount of good to himself and to others. A true psychology of the moral self reveals the fact that working for the good of others is not by itself an ultimate motive. It may either be a means to the realisation of our own individual good—since man, existing as he does *in society*, can hardly realise his own good except through the social good—or may spring from the higher consciousness in which the barriers of individuation are lost and the individual feels that he should love his neighbour not because of his being a neighbour or fellow-man but because it is the same undivided *ātman* that manifests itself in both. The ultimate motive is each man's own good. Life is a great battle, in which each one must take part or perish on "the wheel of transmigration." In order to attain the life of peacefulness and

bliss, one has to fight this battle, and in this battle it is only individualism that counts. If you want to see the moon, you have to use your own eyes; by no means can you enable the blind man to see it. By self-culture and self-effort alone is it possible to approach the way to the Yogi's peaceful and passionless life.

The general trend of Western thought is not in favour of the realisation of a *non-moral* life, since it views the moral distinctions as ultimate and the moral life as the highest form of personal life. With this radical change in standpoint, the criticism hailing from either side falls beside the mark. It is only in some scattered utterings of the mystics that you find any attempted approach to the conception of true freedom referred to above, while it permeates the spiritualism of every serious-minded Hindu. The typical expression of the European mode of viewing the life of objective freedom is to be found in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, in which I believe Hegel appears to be at his best. I shall therefore attempt to give a very brief exposition of Hegel's conception of Objective Freedom.

There are, according to Hegel, three stages in the development of objective freedom, viz., *Recht*, *Moralität*, and *Sittlichkeit*. In the first stage, we find an external law imposed upon us, and we are only required to obey it and not argue about its rationale. Our motives, our approvals and disapprovals, do not count. It is the sphere of mere legality in which we live at this stage, when we are no more than mere persons. But at the second stage called *Moralität* (by no means identical with the English word *morality*) the "mere person" of the legal sphere is turned into a "subject," and the law is not merely obeyed but also recognised and approved. In the sphere of *Recht* the mere command was enough, but in the second stage it does not act as a motive at all unless it receives our internal acquiescence. But there is still something better than the striving or the apposition of the subjective and the objective, and this is realised in the third stage called *Sittlichkeit*, which means objective freedom. Such freedom is incorporated

in the minds of the citizens and implies an implicit and free obedience to the moral law. This is the farthest limit Hegel's thought could reach, and it obviously falls short of the conception of *Jīvanmukti* of the Hindu systems.

The reason is that to Hegel the true form of reality was the State—and even then, not the *ideal State* as in Plato, but the state as it actually exists (this is a point which offers much scope for criticism). In the State, says Hegel, the true moral will comes into the sphere of reality, and Spirit lives in its true nature. The State is a symbol of freedom as realised in the sphere of actuality. The highest morality in the State is based upon the carrying into effect of the rational universal will.

But is such universal will always actually carried out? Does it mean that *what is is right*? At any rate, that is the obvious implication from Hegel's view of the essential rationality of the State *as it actually exists*. This does not explain the *raison d'être* of sin, evil, suffering, bad institutions and the like, which can in no sense be called right or rational. Hegel cannot answer this objection except by quibbling: "Sin issues in death; bad institutions must catch fire, because the nature of things is moral. The good alone is real."

Hegel's discussion of objective freedom is thus carried into the sphere of political philosophy rather than of moral and metaphysical philosophy; hence there is not much in it to compare with the Hindu notion of objective freedom, worked out from a different standpoint. But a presentation of the two views may by itself prove of some usefulness to the student of philosophy.

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